

REMARKS

In response to the Final Office Action dated December 20, 2007, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration based on the above claim amendments and the following remarks. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as presented are in condition for allowance. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 1-37 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36 are independent. In the Final Office Action dated December 20, 2007, Claims 1-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Following this response, Claims 1-37 remain in this application. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's rejections in turn.

I. Interview Summary

Applicants thank Examiner Addy for the courtesy of a telephone interview on February 5, 2008, requested by the undersigned to discuss the rejection of the current claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103. During the interview, Applicants asserted that the cited references do not anticipate or render obvious the claims as currently amended. The Examiner stated that the amendments overcome the cited references, but an updated search would be necessary. No agreement regarding patentability was reached.

II. Rejection of Claims 1-15 and 18-37 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

In the Final Office Action dated December 20, 2007, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-15 and 18-37 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,504,920 ("*Okon*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,721,763 ("*Joseph*"). Claims 1, 18,

21, 29, 32 and 36 have been amended, and Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, add no new matter and are patentable over the cited references.

According to exemplary embodiments, an area party line service may give a caller an option to switch to another area party line for a same exchange by dialing a particular code. (See specification page 18, lines 3-5.) Upon receiving the dialed code, the area party line service then reassigns the caller to the other area party line's port for the exchange if the other area party line has capacity. (See specification page 18, lines 5-7.)

Amended Claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art for at least the reason that it recites, for example, "receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line; in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line." Amended Claims 18, 21, and 29 each includes a similar recitation. Furthermore, amended Claim 32 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art for at least the reason that it recites, for example, "wherein the bridging point for bridging incoming telephone calls is further configured to bridge at least two incoming calls and reassign the bridged calls from the first area party line to a second area party line." Amended Claim 36 includes a similar recitation. Support for these amendments can be found in the specification at least on page 18, line 3-7.

In contrast to the subject matter claimed, *Okon* at least does not disclose reassigning a caller from a first area party line to a second area party line. For example, *Okon* merely discloses that each party can be given a first option to terminate a conversation by dialing a special code. (See col. 6, lines 26-27.) When the

conversation is terminated, each party remaining connected to *Okon*'s system can be notified that the conversation was terminated and given a second option to return to a main menu or request another partner from a same topic as the terminated conversation. (See col. 6, lines 27-32.) *Okon* does not disclose "receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line" and "in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line" as set forth in claim 1. Rather, a caller in *Okon* must terminate a conversation before further instructing *Okon*'s system to request another partner from a same topic conversation as the terminated conversation.

Furthermore, *Joseph* does not overcome *Okon*'s deficiencies. For example, *Joseph* merely discloses a method for alerting a caller to a chat service about product and/or service offerings by a chat service provider. (See col. 1, lines 64-66.) Nowhere in *Joseph* does it disclose enabling a caller to switch area party lines. Consequently, like *Okon*, *Joseph* does not disclose "receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line" and "in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line" as set forth in claim 1.

Okon and *Joseph*, either individually or in combination, would not have led to the claimed subject matter because *Okon* and *Joseph* at least do not disclose "receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line; in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line," as recited by amended Claim 1

or “wherein the bridging point for bridging incoming telephone calls is further configured to bridge at least two incoming calls and reassign the bridged calls from the first area party line to a second area party line,” as recited by amended Claim 32. Amended Claims 18, 21, and 29 each includes a similar recitation to Claim 1 and amended Claim 36 includes a similar recitation to Claim 32. Accordingly, independent Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36 each patentably distinguishes the present invention over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36.

Dependent Claims 2-15, 19-20, 22-28, 30,-31, 33-35, and 37 are also allowable at least for the reasons described above regarding independent Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36, and by virtue of their respective dependencies upon independent Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections of dependent Claims 2-15, 19-20, 22-28, 30-31, 33-35, and 37.

III. Rejection of Claims 16 and 17 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 16 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Okon* in view *Joseph*, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,608,820 (“*Bradshaw*”). Dependent Claims 16 and 17 are each patentably distinguishable over the cited art for at least the reason that they include, due to their dependency on amended independent Claim 1, “receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line; in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area

party line to a second area party line.” Support for this amendment may be found at least on page 18, line 3-7.

As stated above, consistent with the exemplary embodiments, an area party line service may give a caller an option to switch to another area party line for a same exchange by dialing a particular code. (See specification page 18, lines 3-5.) Upon receiving the dialed code, the area party line service then reassigns the caller to the other area party line’s port for the exchange if the other area party line has capacity. (See specification page 18, lines 5-7.)

As established above, *Okon* does not disclose “receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line” and “in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line” as set forth in claim 1. Rather, a caller in *Okon* must terminate a conversation before further instructing *Okon*’s system to request another partner from a same topic conversation as the terminated conversation.

Furthermore, *Joseph* does not overcome *Okon*’s deficiencies. Nowhere in *Joseph* does it disclose enabling a caller to switch area party lines. Consequently, like *Okon*, *Joseph* does not disclose “receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line” and “in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line” as set forth in claim 1.

Moreover, *Bradshaw* does not overcome *Okon's* and *Joseph's* deficiencies.

Bradshaw merely discloses a method and an apparatus that: i) allows a controlling party to add unlimited (theoretically) subject parties; ii) allows the controlling party to selectively enter into a private conversation with any subject party despite the call placement order; iii) allows a controlling party to selectively drop any subject party despite the call placement order; and iv) that is logically consistent and easy to remember by the consumer. (See col. 2, lines 43-51.) Nowhere in *Bradshaw* is there a disclosure of enabling a caller to switch party lines. Consequently, like *Okon* and *Joseph*, *Bradshaw* does not disclose “receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line” and “in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line” as set forth in claim 1.

Okon, *Joseph*, and *Bradshaw* either individually or in combination, would not have led to the claimed subject matter because *Okon*, *Joseph*, and *Bradshaw* at least do not disclose “receiving a reassignment indication from a caller in the first area party line; in response to receiving the reassignment indication from the caller in the first area party line, bridging the caller from the first area party line to a second area party line,” as recited in amended claim 1 from which claims 16 and 17 ultimately depend.. Accordingly, dependent Claims 16 and 17 are each patentably distinguishable over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of dependent Claims 16 and 17.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Office Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Office Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability. Furthermore, the Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 13-2725.

Respectfully submitted,
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